

2

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR, Emma Keyes

RDBNPNG 28: CONFESSION

3

COMEDY IS SERIOUS BUSINESS, David Diaz

4

JO(A)NI, Alex Swanson

6

FREEDOM HIGHWAY, David Diaz

6

SHMURDA SHE WROTE, Sebastian Rodriguez-Vars

8

JOHNNY CASH IN SAN QUENTIN, Claire Haldeman

10

BLACK BRITISH, SPIT: THE ESSENTIAL AESTHETICS OF GRIME, Alex Swanson

14

IN DEFENSE OF ONE DIRECTION, Emma Keyes



2–15

SONGS, AND WHAT I'M TRYING TO CONVEY WHEN I LISTEN . . . , Charlie Bardey

Letter from the Editor

Picture this: a seventh grader alone in the room she shares with her younger brother. She lies on her bed, earbuds—attached to a green screen-less iPod shuffle—firmly pressed into her ears. The soft refrain of Taylor Swift's "You Belong With Me" drifts, barely audible, out into the room. She thinks about the boy she has a crush on, just for a moment, before turning her mind to other matters. Seventh grade is a big deal, after all. Middle school has to be taken seriously. Time to turn off Taylor and move on up in the world.

That's my seventh grade confession: that I secretly listened to Taylor Swift from time to time. I was undermining the indie credibility I so carefully cultivated through listening to a selection of Green Day albums on repeat for the entire year (I was just trying my best in seventh grade). After that, I moved onto R.E.M. and Arcade Fire and other bands that I thought were cool at the time, and some of them even were. Nonetheless, I had a secret soft spot for Taylor Swift. Say what you will about her career trajectory and her often grating public persona, but *Fearless* spoke to a generation of seventh grade girls (and probably plenty of seventh grade boys, too). Her music certainly wasn't cool in my conception of coolness, but her music was extremely catchy and just angsty enough to hook a twelve-year-old girl who pretended she didn't ever have feelings.

Here at Yale, there are confessions waiting in the wings all around us. It took me so long to write this letter that I honestly should probably not be in charge of this magazine, but here we are! Radio is the community that I'm most involved in, but I am terrible at listening to new music. I could go on and on and so can everybody else. Some of these are easy to share ("Sorry I've been using your toothpaste all year."—My roommate) and some are a lot harder (How do you handle a breaking-down friendship?). There are confessions of heartbreak, questionable academic performances, social anxiety, personal hygiene, and countless others. But this 'zine focuses on music and so this issue revolves around musical confessions.

Musical confessions take on all kinds of forms. Every love song that has ever been written serves as a confession. Songs can take on other confessional topics, too, of course, but love and the emotions that come along with it certainly lends itself to the confessional form. Then there are so many confessions surrounding and about music that don't actually take up the content of any individual song specifically. Lying about a band you like or don't like or have never listened to, for example. Or reflecting on a relationship in light of the music that played throughout it. The possibilities of the confession are endless. Inside this issue of *Relatively Dark Blue Neither Purple Nor Green* are just a few fun, bold, interesting, and poignant takes on what it means to confess. So turn up "Love Story" and take a look.

Radio is dead,

Emma Keyes
Editor in Chief

COMEDY IS SERIOUS BUSINESS David Diaz

R When I was about ten years old, I am ashamed to admit that I went through a Weird Al Yankovic phase. "White and Nerdy," "eBay," and "I'll Sue Ya" were the songs my preteen friends and I enjoyed most. Eventually, I grew up, both personally and musically. The people around me who listened to a lot of good music, like my dad, older kids, and my music teachers, instilled in me a sense that music deserves to be taken seriously. Serious music fans, it seemed, did not listen to Weird Al. For musicians and listeners, musical sounds can communicate feelings, experiences, and ideas that words alone cannot. The way that serious music fans often discuss music implies that music is uniquely divine and transcendent. Music can make a political statement, it can explore the complexities of human emotion, and it can communicate spiritual depth. Comedic songs, however, remind us not to take music or ourselves too seriously. The likes of Weird Al, the Lonely Island, and Garfunkel and Oates, use music as just one of many tools in their work as comics. Music aficionados scoff at these musical comedians, dismissing their songs as parodies of music, and therefore not actual music. To some extent, this is true. Music, to Weird Al and his ilk, is primarily a medium to tell jokes; they are comics first, musicians second. Rather than seeing comedic music as non-musical, music is actually incomplete without comedy. Unlike musical comedians, typical musicians—that is, those who are not primarily comedians—use comedy in popular music to more freely express ideas that serious music cannot.

Classic blues singers artfully employed comedy, particularly on topics of sex and gender, as a way to expand thematic diversity in music. Black feminist singers like Bessie Smith, Ma Rainey, and Ethel Waters started their careers performing on the vaudeville circuit. Vaudeville was an incredibly popular and diverse performance genre that featured variety acts like comedians, musicians, dancers, jugglers, and short plays, among other acts. Most people didn't have radios in the home, so vaudeville was the main source of entertainment across the country. This meant that performers could not rely on a single talent to survive in a performance troupe. Singers had to be able to write songs, dance, *and* tell jokes. The virtuosity of these women's musical performances relied, in part, on their ability to effectively deploy humor. For example, Victoria Spivey recorded the Ida Cox and Porter Grainger composition "One Hour Mama" in 1937. In the song, she sang, "I'm a one hour mama/So no one minute papa/Ain't the kind of man for me." Spivey occupies the role of singer and comic, and her interpretation of the song's meaning relies on the strength of her comedic delivery as much as her musical delivery. Her voice is unique, high-pitched, raspy. The way she sings the refrain centers her sexual pleasure and roasts the inadequate men that cannot please her. Comedy allowed Spivey to resist patriarchal sexual standards that focused on male pleasure and ignored female sexual agency by refusing to take gendered sexual restrictions seriously. While the blues is often mythologized as a sorrowful genre, its rich comedic tradition of explicit sexual content gave performers a space to speak about their experiences, desires, and struggles.

Unlike every genre that preceded it and most that followed, the blues offered women a platform to radically critique patriarchy, racism, capitalism, cisnormativity, and heteronormativity, in large part because the blues allowed for comedic expression. Comedy allows performers to explore the taboo and toy with social boundaries, providing a spoonful of sugar to help the radical critique go down. Too often, musicians cannot confess the truth of their experiences through mere seriousness. Silliness, parody, sarcasm, and satire are all tools that allow people to deal with serious problems in the world. Although, the corny chuckle from the likes of Weird Al doesn't exactly inspire a radical reimagination of the human condition, the legacy of the comic blues persists. Through the ways that hip hop artists diss each other, perform swagger, and poetically engage in social critique, the long tradition of comedic performance within American music continues. We, as listeners, should remember to pay attention to the times when we laugh with musicians. As we laugh, we must also realize that comedy deserves to be taken seriously.

JO(A)NI
Alex Swanson

DI was a sophomore when I took English 123, intro to creative writing. My professor was a lovely poet with young twin daughters; the kindest woman whose work just ripped your heart out. Incredibly hard-hitting bits on love, death, New Haven. The class was good, but not amazing—about as good as an intro class could get. I remember an assignment that stuck with me more than others. Professor Chapman gave us three photographers and told us to write a monologue from the perspective of a figure in one of their images. I chose Diane Arbus's *A Young Man in Curlers at Home on West 20th Street*, from 1966. He gazes directly at us, his eyebrows and eyeliner painted thickly, cigarette clutched elegantly in nail-clad claws. The harsh chiaroscuro of the jawline highlights eyebrows and curlers, beckoning us into the performance.

I remember the monologue well—I created this drag persona for him, for her, for *Vivienne*, in which she told a friend about another queen she used to know, Sofia. Sofia died, she said; mysteriously. Mind you, I was a sophomore, naïve. I thought this would make for good writing. And to Professor Chapman, relatively speaking, it did. I got a good grade. But it's not Sofia I'm focusing on now, it's what made Vivienne remember her. Vivienne had heard the song "Harry's House/Centerpiece" from Joni Mitchell's *The Hissing of Summer Lawns* earlier that week, and the melancholy tune had sparked memories in her. The song brought Sofia back.

"You ever heard the song 'Harry's House?' Joni Mitchell. It's this real sad song . . . what's that word . . . *melancholy*, yeah? About immigrants, the city, you know? I've always *loved* it. There's this jazz part in the middle that reminds me . . ."

And I wrote that because "Harry's House" reminds me, too.

I first started listening to Joni Mitchell when I was sixteen, on my mother's recommendation. In fact, I did. I remember those first few months with my license driving to school, switching between "Help Me" and the radio while frantically trying to make the 7:50 am start time. As time passed I delved deeper into Joni's work, and within six months I'd familiarized myself with her entire discography from 1968 to 1978—once I hit *Mingus* and the 80s, I stopped. At that point Joni became far too esoteric for my young self (and to be honest, the synths were off-putting).

What was it that drew me to her? Of course, with *Court and Spark* it was sheer melodic joy. Its chord progressions tap into a deeply pleasing western sensibility of pop-folk, extending far beyond the warbling singer-songwriter genre so popular at the time. Yet with albums like *Summer Lawns* and *Hejira*, I related to the inward-looking Joni on a "deeper" level. It was *the angsty time*, and although Joni's lyrics were far too mature for me to understand, her pared-down style was not. And this doesn't necessarily have to do with production; *Summer Lawns* as a baroque stream of consciousness speaks little to *Blue*'s lone dulcimer. Joni's early work achieves an over-arching authenticity in minimalism, creating consistently resonant poetic images. Think the housewife in "Edith and the Kingpin," and the helicopter "land[ing] on the Pan-Am roof/ Like a dragonfly on a tomb" in "Harry's House." On a second or third listen they burn themselves into the mind, crossing boundaries of understanding to connect sound to picture, picture to memory, memory to emotion.

These lyrical images, strong enough to stand on their own without melody, spoke to my reductive teenage worldview. Rather than account for the diversity of feeling in *Blue*, the recurring motifs and stealthy environmentalism in *Ladies of the Canyon*, or the brooding intellectualism of *Hejira* I seemed to only think in terms of myself—it's wild how we can mistake narcissism for introspection. Listening to Joni now I can only begin to unravel the depth of the emotion she imbues every song with. The languor, the heartbreak, the travelogue—these are real, lived experiences, pumping with organic energy. We return to this Joni because in each song, in each memory we find a bit of ourselves. Or better yet, we become a kind of confidant, a privileged receiver of stories and secrets. Joni's warbling soprano becomes a kind of intimate, delightful murmuring.

At the same time that I began listening to Joni I read my first Joan Didion essay—this time, not on mom's word. I very much understand the trap of Joan Didion: if you're mildly interested in the American essay or have taken (or even looked at the syllabus for) English 120 then you know Joan, her deal, and her work. But I've given up on the English major and I certainly don't want to be the next face of US journalism or nonfiction, so stay with me.

I read Joan for many of the reasons I listened to Joni: melodic joy, simple aesthetic, and of course, literary merit (that last reason, however, is far too obvious and much too free from critical thought—but it bears noting). I loved (and still love) her *look*: how her prose and style are fundamentally

intertwined. Joan Didion speaks for an essentially American minimalism founded on a combination of cultural awareness and deep self-critique. Her 1979 collection of essays *The White Album* famously begins with the line, "We tell ourselves stories in order to live." Joan writes to survive; and for her to survive is to hone, to engage in the asymptotic task of self-actualization through the act of ruminating, of putting words to paper.

There's a recording of Joni performing the song "Barangrill" from *For the Roses* (1972) at a small venue in the late 1970s. The song is about a waitress at a small beachside grill. Mitchell lauds the woman's wisdom: "You think she knows something by the second refill/You think she's enlightened as she totals your bill/You say, 'show me the way to barangrill.'" Before Mitchell begins the song, she chuckles, "I wrote this while searching for the Great Guru." And even though that's a joke, it also isn't. Mitchell treated her work as a project of existence, a search for meaning within the quotidian. I can't help but connect this approach to Didion, especially when they tap into a similar ambiguity of living, Vivienne's "melancholy."

So it was quite the experience reading Didion's novel *Play it as it Lays* during the Arizona summer, or essays like "Holy Water" at the height of a drought. Like Mitchell, Didion was a sensory experience. Her apocalyptic images of Los Angeles and overall disenchantment—which I like to think is a hallmark of the American West—worked perfectly with the adolescent idea of a spiteful and boring world. That does *not* mean, though, that Didion's ennui and my angst were similar at all. Hers was induced by tragedy, ultimately futile and totally inescapable. Mine was induced by naiveté, and more importantly, laziness.

But this is not my confession.

My confession is that only in the past few months have I begun to pick apart these teenage obsessions and place them in any sort of larger context.

Until now I have been relating my love for Mitchell and Didion to callow angst, noting what I didn't know through what they did know. Yet this dichotomy is itself reductive. What did it mean for me as a cis male to feel connected at my core to two women? Why did I feel such an urge to tether their work to my teenage self?

I don't think this was a process of personally relating, but of fetishization. I loved their work, yes, but I loved their bodies, too: the facades, the skins they presented publicly. And I painted my own problems and desires onto these skins and claimed them for myself.

It was a point of pride for me to "love" these

women. I could not embody their words—what I thought were ideas and lessons geared towards the identity-craving teenager—without others knowing that I did. It plays into this notion of public affection; not necessarily the competitive name *three albums* but the idea that one's taste for an artist can only be activated or validated if it is publicized. At times this desire for attention clouded both the purity of the work itself and the intensely intimate experience of encountering it. In a way, it denied them (or at least their work) the freedom to move, to sit and develop and become. Joan and Joni spoke for me, but only to an end.

I have therefore begun again. Over the last year I have revisited Joni Mitchell, starting over and letting the music do as it pleases. And sometimes it doesn't work; the music doesn't *do* what I want it to. But this is rare. And perhaps I'll keep going where I stopped before—maybe the synth is what I need now. But that remains to be seen. I read and reread Joan when I can, which isn't often enough. But a copy of *Slouching Towards Bethlehem* still sits on my nightstand at home, and *The White Album* in the same place at school.

In the end, it's all still relatively *small*. But my years with Joni Mitchell and Joan Didion have been a constant undercurrent for years now, and I can trace bits and pieces of my own development through engagements with their work. Interest in an artist can be short-lived and intense, and we look back fondly on these moments of encounter, bookmarking with music, with literature. Yet there are also those to whom we constantly return, artists as patterns woven into time and experience. And I believe that it is our place to understand these patterns, to look back and comprehend not only how but *why* we return as we do. I did it to make a change, to try to force a more ethical looking and listening so work that was *good* could do what it needed to, to let it speak and move. And like the creation good art itself, this endeavor is learned—through education and experience alike.

So Joan and Joni continue, and I want to hear them. As with Vivienne they push me into the past. But this is the only way forward.



FREEDOM HIGHWAY

David Diaz

B Rhiannon Giddens' *Freedom Highway* proves that music gives voice to historical and political moments. Giddens, lead singer of folk's Carolina Chocolate Drops, released her second solo album this February, incorporating not only well-written original songs, but also well-executed and timely renditions of classic folk, soul, and gospel tracks. The black freedom struggle both past and present provides the backdrop for both the covers and original songs of the album. The title track, "Freedom Highway," is a gospel classic originally recorded by the Staple Singers at the height of the Civil Rights Movement. Giddens' cover, which features folk rock artist Bhi Bhiman, reminds listeners of the intimate relationships between music cultures, religious groups, and political movements during the 1960s. The tracklist places these relationships in historical context, both tracing the musical, religious, and political roots of the Civil Rights Era and connecting this lineage to contemporary struggles.

Many of Giddens' original compositions take the perspective of enslaved people from before the Civil War. She was inspired to write the opening track, "At the Purchaser's Option," when she read an advertisement from the 1830s for a woman whose nine-month-old baby was available "at the purchaser's option." Giddens' defiant refrain disrupts the song's disturbing premise and melancholy acoustic backing, humanizing her enslaved subject. Giddens' historical project of recording the perspectives of slaves criticizes the intentional erasure of black artistry throughout history and demonstrates the relevance of slave narratives to today, as black mothers lead movements against a criminal justice system that separates them from their children through imprisonment and police executions. Her song "Come Love Come" highlights this dialogue between past and present, opening with a call-and-response riff between an acoustic banjo and an electric guitar. The song takes the perspective of an enslaved woman, who recounts the injustices she and her loved ones experienced throughout her life, remembers taking her chance to escape her enslavement, and sings to her husband to follow her. Just as the narrator of the song makes sure to look back to those that came before her and those still under bondage, Giddens asks listeners to remember the historical context of

today's injustice and recognize that people continue to suffer today.

Rooted firmly in their experience in folk, Giddens and her collaborators do not hesitate to experiment with rock, hip hop, and Dixieland jazz. This experimentation gave *Freedom Highway* something that Giddens' first solo album, *Tomorrow Is My Turn*, lacked. This speaks to Giddens' growth as an artist, and her future work will benefit from even more risk-taking, particularly with respect to Giddens' vocal performance. What is so surprising about the diversity of genres on the album is that Giddens seamlessly links them not only thematically, but also sonically. The most notable example of this is her hip hop-influenced track, "Better Get It Right the First Time." While it is clear that there are not professional hip hop producers on this track, it features a few solid bars by Justin Harrington over a soul-influenced horn section and a banjo riff for good measure. The explicitly anti-police brutality lyrics and the diverse sound make the album's relevance to contemporary politics and music explicitly clear. *Freedom Highway*, though, demonstrates that music doesn't have to sound modern to be relevant. In fact, it shows that music history is as important as ever.

SHMURDA SHE WROTE

Sebastian Rodriguez-Vars

N As a rising junior in high school, I filled the summer of 2014 with cheap vodka, pickup basketball, and Bobby Shmurda. At each sweaty, too-packed, not-that-fun house party I went to, "Hot N*gga," by Bobby Shmurda, would always play at some point in the night. Aside from the uncomfortable moment when one ignorant white kid would rap the n-word when it was playing, the song was an undeniable banger. "Hot N*gga" was a shot of espresso in the hip-hop genre. Bobby spit with such swagger and vindication that it became one of the most quotable songs of the past five years (without even having a chorus or a hook). Shmurda's energy and presence were so recognizable that he, a baby-faced assassin, seemed destined for stardom. "Hot N*gga" inspired a dance, countless vines, and everything else that accompanies hit singles these days. What sets Shmurda's song apart, however, is the line-by-line confession of the crimes Bobby Shmurda and the CS9 crip gang committed.

Detailing crimes within music is nothing new. From icons like Jay-Z to soundcloud rappers like Lil

Pump, many artists weave their connections to certain crimes into their music as casually as I order my coffee. However, the creation of gangsta rap and trap music has spurred conversations about whether or not artists can be tried for the crimes they detail in their music. In August of 2014, the New Jersey State Supreme Court ruled that rap lyrics cannot be used as evidence unless they contain "a strong nexus" to the accused crime. The meaning of the phrase 'strong nexus' can be exploited, but it reminds me of a Key & Peele sketch in which a rapper outlines who he killed, the weapon used, and the alibi he would use to prove his innocence in court. The skit goes further with the album name being "I Killed Darnell," featuring album art of Jordan Peele's character standing over the dead body of Darnell.

Though hilarious, the sketch is shockingly similar to Shmurda's case. In the first lines of his hit song, Bobby raps:

"Like I talk to Shyste when I shot n*gga/Like you seen him twirl, then he drop n*gga/and we keep them 9 millis on my block, n*gga/And Monte keep it on him, he done dropped n*gga"

And:

"Tones known to get busy with them Glocks, n*gga/Try to run down and you can catch a shot, n*gga"

Comedian Desus Nice sums it up perfectly: "He [Shmurda] did a rap genius of every crime him and his boys committed in the past two years . . . They [the police] have this shit listed like the credits for the 'Hot N*gga' video." It is pretty awe-inducing how straight-forward the rap is—there are multiple confessions to shooting people and gun possession. The most quotable lyric (and one that appeared all over social media after the single's release) was, "And tell my n*gga, Shmurda teamin', ho/Mitch caught a body about a week ago." As it turns out, Deshain Crockett (Mitch), a member of the G9 crew featured in the 'Hot N*gga' music video, was charged and convicted of four counts of conspiracy and two counts of attempted murder along with a slew of other weapons, assault, and endangerment charges.

After looking into the G9 case, I was left with a plethora of questions. How could I, a fairly privileged person, sing and dance to "Hot N*gga" when people's lives have been ruined by this gang violence?

A popular myth is that gangsta rap is simply a glorification of the gangster lifestyle, pushing kids towards gangs and a life of crime. This claim, however, lacks a basic understanding of low-income, high-crime areas that many of these gangsta rappers come from. Their music is a reflection of their background. As artist T.I. once said, "If you want to

change the content of the music, change the environment of the artist and he won't have such negative things to say." If you read the lyrics of some of the most famous gangsta rappers they admit the lifestyle isn't one they want, but the only one they've known. In the song "Malcolm," G Herbo paints the picture of a young man named Malcolm who fell victim to the inescapable institutions that raised him. Not only is Herbo making light of life in his community, he's shaming the system that fosters these institutions.

A difficulty many listeners across all genres will inevitably face is whether they can support an artist despite a criminal history. It's an uncomfortable gray area for some while others separate the artist from the music. Rapper xxxtentacion has recently blown up despite a conviction for assaulting his girlfriend. Surprisingly, or maybe unsurprisingly given our president, his criminal issues haven't bothered some prominent figures in the hip-hop community. Lil Uzi Vert even tweeted #Freexxx. His crime also hasn't tarnished his commercial success: "Look at me" has 96.6 million plays on Soundcloud. That being said, there's a difference between Shmurda and X. Shmurda's crimes, and those of rappers like him, are crimes stemming from the institution he was born into, whereas X's are rooted in being a horrible person. To give more context on Shmurda's life, he was raised by a single mother while his father was in prison. Surrounded by gangs, G9 was a form of protection and camaraderie that helped launch Shmurda and his team into the national spotlight. Just when things were looking up for their crew—they filed G9 as a record company, had multiple hit singles from different artists, and were signed to a lucrative deal with Epic records—the actions of some of their crew's past came back to haunt them. All of G9 was thrown in jail on a variety of charges, but Bobby Shmurda was not accused of violent charges, and served jail-time for conspiracy and gun charges that resulted from the actions of the crew at large. Though G9 went from gang to record company, their past destined them for Rikers Island.

Ultimately, an artist can't be completely separated from their work due to the fact that any consumption of an artist's music financially supports them, and thus their actions. Will people still listen to xxx? Likely. In fact, this culture of viral violence hasn't slowed down. The emergence of Tay-K, a 17 year old rapper who got famous for his song "The Race," a song he made and released while on the run for capital murder (also rapped about in the song), is living proof.



In 1968, Johnny Cash stood on a stage in front of the inmates of San Quentin prison and said he'd like to say something serious before he ended. "It might be off key," he says. "but I want to get it in."

He had spent the afternoon making love to the Robin Hood nostalgia of American prisons, not just lilting through classics like "Wanted Man" and "Starkville City Jail" with tongue-in-cheek style, but also cracking jokes with the inmates and playing himself off as a sinner rough-around the edges.

"Hey, you there," he calls. "Can you pass me my briefcase with all the songs I stole in it?"

The prisoners hoot and rumble with mirth. The microphone hiccups, and the organic shuffling of live music commences.

"No no no," Johnny cuts in a second later. "That's the one with all my dope—I mean, stuff—in it."

More hollering. A contrabass chuckle from Cash. He was having a great time, the prisoners were having a great time. I can't imagine the wardens were feeling the same.

At this show, Johnny Cash debuted the song "San Quentin," which he had written specifically for the occasion. Such tantalizing lines as "San Quentin, may you rot and burn in hell," roused his audience to a thunderous roar. As the do-si-do of the banjo line fades out, the prisoners call out for him to sing it again. Of course, he gives the people what they want.

The recording of this concert that I listened to had a tracklist tucked into the inside sleeve. It looks like there is a typo: "Track 7: San Quentin, Track 8: San Quentin." But to me, driving the Blue Ridge Parkway, looping through the vertebrae of Virginia back in this amber-caught morning in early August, I felt like I understood.

I had never listened to Johnny Cash before, mostly because my parents never listened to him. I was not raised on folk or country music, so while I knew of him, and had heard that the man couldn't hit a note if he tried and spoke the good word of the American mid-South in lilting, prosaic speech, rather than song, I had never felt the need or the inclination to find out what I was missing. The appeal was lost on me.

But there it was, in plain text in front of me: "Track 7: San Quentin, Track 8: San Quentin." Simple, blunt, a little wry,

sticking it to the man in the self-conscious way of all artists who want to be loved. Sure, it is a masquerade, a carefully constructed persona designed like flypaper to catch everybody drawn in by the nostalgia and simplicity and Americana of the banal verse he spins.

And, I'll admit, it caught me .

I was rooting for Johnny and the inmates, not the wardens. The languid bouncing of the music and his honeycomb voice just compel faith. Even knowing the artifice, even hearing the strain in the implication that he and the inmates of San Quentin prison have gone through the same struggles, I buy it. Maybe it was something about the open I-81 corridor, driving north from Tennessee, maybe it was something about the sun south of the Mason-Dixon line, but as I listened to *Live At San Quentin*, I was filled with the exact nostalgia and mischievous glee that he wanted to elicit in his audience.

He is the fable of the American everyman. He transacts in charm and carefree candor, giving the people what they don't even know they want yet. He plucks, and he rumbles, and he grins at his own jokes. He doesn't take anything too seriously.

Until 45:06, when he says, "I want to hit a serious note." And he does.

"June and I went to the Land of Israel in the month of May last year." He sounds Biblical as he introduces "He Turned the Water into Wine," inspired by a trip to the town of Cana, where Jesus of Nazareth performed his very first miracle. He sings so earnestly, nothing tongue-in-cheek about it.

But that, too, was what the people wanted. Johnny Cash, too, hopes. He can be rough as sandpaper and sharp as a pocket knife, but he, too, believes in something.

Listening to him singing about a poor Jewish carpenter walking on water, feeding the masses, turning water from the cistern bloodred, I can't help but sing along. The Virginia sun is in my hair and eyes, the blue mist of rural America inching in on all sides.

I imagine miracles are sort of like places you've never been.

So maybe that was what Johnny Cash was singing to the inmates of San Quentin, and to me. I haven't been where you are, but here is my faith, and my song. Watch me turn this water into wine.

BLACK BRITISH, SPIT: THE ESSENTIAL AESTHETICS OF GRIME

Alex Swanson



He stands in the center of a group in a parking lot. Clad in a bright red Adidas jacket and sipping a water bottle, he prepares to spit his rhymes. The atmosphere is tense, expectant. Subtle keyboard-lute riffs play as the group waits for the beat to drop. The classically grey English sky casts all in a bright white light, bringing the image into sharp focus. He eyes the camera. “It’s Stormzy, innit . . . reppin, innit.” He licks his lips. Suddenly he spits as the bass hits. “Man try say he’s better than me/Tell my man shut up/Mention my name in your tweets/Oi rudeboy shut up/How can you think you better than me?/Shut up.”

Stormzy’s “Shut Up” music video, with over forty-two million views on YouTube, typifies the genre known today as “grime.” Over the course of the video, Stormzy, surrounded by his crew, raps of his ambivalence toward success as a grime star and frustrations with his challenging past. “I was out hungry, so damn hungry/Man tried eat then leave me the bones/Now these n*ggas they need me to grow/Hot chocolate and a Panini to go.” Hands flying, he embodies the freestyle MC: live, rough, encircled by his hype men. Today’s contemporary cultural sphere relies heavily on American hip-hop modes of music, fashion, and speech. In this regard, Stormzy’s video appears familiar to most viewers. Yet grime’s history as a genre points to a more diverse range of influences. The musical movement today is more a hybrid of British subcultural and diasporic forms than an iteration of American hip hop; and within these hybrid roots and aesthetics lie nuances of essentially Black British identity.

Grime emerged in early 2000s East London. Its origins trace back to council housing projects in a district known as The Bow. In the face of a new millennium and a youth culture constantly in flux, young men and women gathered to create a new form true to life: rhymes in the spirit of documentation.¹ The advent of better computer technology meant that, for the first time, one did not need access to a studio to create beats.² This “dry ethos” dictated the harsh minimalist sonic and aesthetic experience of grime.³ Characterized by what music journalist Simon Reynolds describes as “gruff rapping, stiff electro-influenced beats and raucous

aggression,” grime feeds off its own harshness. The genre is a product of its varied influences: dancehall and reggae from groups of Caribbean descent, house from the great cities of the American Midwest, and hiplife from west Africa.⁴ Caribbean music particularly influenced British MC culture, with its culture of “rap, spit, and soliloquize with idiosyncratic flows” as characteristic of the dancehall club.⁵ Hiplife—a lesser-known genre on the international stage—originated in Accra, Ghana. “Fus[ing] hip-hop sampling, beatmaking, and rap lyrical flow with older forms of highlife music, Akan storytelling, and proverbial oratory,” hiplife was the jumping-off point for many of today’s well-known names in grime, such as Dizzee Rascal, a first-generation child of Ghanaian immigrants.⁶ This and other Black diasporic communities—many of which were represented in the council housing from which grime sprung—form the backbone of the genre, imbuing it with often-silenced histories of race and ethnicity in Britain.

Grime is therefore deeply rooted in place, indebted to its homegrown physical origins. Reynolds writes that the genre’s “absolute heartland consists of a few square miles in that part of East London not served by the Tube . . . a parochial scene, obsessed with a sense of place, riven by internecine conflicts and territorial rivalries.”⁷ This, in part, comes from grime’s rise on the airwaves through pirate radio; unlicensed broadcasting from an independent studio.⁸ At the famed Crossways Estate in The Bow, the stations Déjà vu FM and Rinse FM launched the careers of stars like Dizzee Rascal and Tinchy Stryder (the most well-known member of the collective Ruff Sqwad).⁹ Before technologies such as YouTube and music streaming services could spread mcs’ work easily and legally, pirate radio accessibly showcased one’s work in a public arena. As the 1990s drew to a close, new standards of fashion and wealth made it more difficult for diverse communities to enter clubs, raves, and parties—traditional forums to present and experience new music.¹⁰ Youth clubs in East London began to close as more people began to attend garage clubs.¹¹ The garage culture that permeated these spaces dictated that those not sporting the latest sartorial trends—at that point high-end brands such as Moschino and Versace—could not enter London’s premier contemporary musical institutions.¹² Pirate radio was, therefore, not only an accessible media outlet, but also a solution to the problem of exclusion—the idea of a generation “denied club culture but raised on mass culture” was familiar with pathways that could circumscribe

the mainstream.¹³

This fundamentally alternative nature of grime places it in a clear timeline of essentially British street counterculture. "Something about this country," as opposed to others, writes Clive Martin of *The Observer*, "the divisions, the class system, the general sense of distrust and dissatisfaction—seems to breed youth subcultures like no other place on Earth."¹⁴ The television series *Street, Style & Sound*, broadcast on Channel 4 in 2015, laid out this timeline of subcultures. It hypothesized that, since the advent of punk in the late 1970s, Britain has been subject to a kind of counterculture pendulum swinging between different styles and trends. Indeed, the entrenched social stratification of Britain (particularly in its cities), combined with mainstream distrust of the country's government and established ideologies (reaching its peak in the Thatcher years of the 1980s), fostered an environment conducive to counterculture and the creation of avenues to breed it in the future.¹⁵ Styles oscillate between polar aesthetics: harsh and gentle, inaccessible and inclusive. Punk turned into house, house into grunge, grunge into garage, and garage into grime.¹⁶ Each countercultural form contains a rich diversity of iterations, yet through archival footage and comprehensive interviews, *Street, Style & Sound* captures the exchanges and encounters between disparate countercultures. It was often the technologies of production and distribution that formed these connections, "an abiding infrastructure based around pirates, dubplates [unofficial releases on vinyl], and white labels sold direct to specialist stores."¹⁷ Grime, therefore, with origins in site-specific London locations, also comes from a tradition of counterculture connected to social and political issues in Britain.

Yet these local beginnings are what established "territorial rivalries." As Stormzy raps, subtly dipping his body to the beat, he lays claim to his success, demanding that "Shut Up" not only be heard but also obeyed. He does not, however, present a fantasy of opulence that one would expect from such pride in wealth. Instead, he returns to his roots—to grime's roots—and engages with the genre at its most base aesthetic level. While the recording technology and media of "Shut Up" are reflective of today, its freestyle rhymes (activated through casual performance) embody grime's infancy from a decade and a half ago. Grime's authority, its originality, lies more in its home-grown aesthetic and humble roots than in a hip-hop potential for commodified change and evolution.

The contested territories of grime are therefore not simply the physical sites it came from, or the airwaves it took hold of, but the history and authenticity of the genre itself.

The multimedia-based aesthetics of grime also point to this drive for authenticity. Pirate radio, while useful for wide dissemination, was ephemeral. To release recorded work, the original grime rappers would set their rhymes to video and burn DVDs that would then be informally sold and exchanged.¹⁸ *Risky Roadz*, of 2005, a seminal series now on its third installment (videos are broadcast today over YouTube), alternates between music videos, freestyle footage, and interviews.¹⁹ All footage is documentary, unedited and, in many instances, visually ambiguous in night-vision sepia tones. In interviews rappers describe "the scene," often-times crediting pirate radio as their introduction to grime but *Risky Roadz* as their ultimate chance to get their rhymes heard and remembered.²⁰

While the DVDs feature different rappers and videos, their underlying modes of representation are the same. At the beginning of the first *Risky Roadz*, Dizzee Rascal introduces his first "roll video," in opposition to what he dubs his "concept work," as part of the grime scene.²¹ "I'm not neglecting my roots," he claims in response to being accused by his anonymous interviewer of leaning too much on the garage genre.²² The video suddenly cuts to Dizzee performing his untitled song, at first alone and then surrounded by a hype crew. As the night light shines brightly from the unseen video camera, Dizzee and his boys become washed out, their sports jackets and hats glowing to the beat of an industrial kick drum playing from a nearby speaker. The sounds of the street—car horns, whining brakes, hubbubs of passers-by—mingle with Dizzee's rhymes about growing up in Bow, the site of the film itself. We see here the mirrored composition of "Shut Up," of a rapper among men performing for the specifically homemade film. Stormzy, too, does not neglect his roots. *Risky Roadz* reflects grime's emplacement, its demands to remain either within or at least heavily influenced by its East London origins. They also put an image to the sound, visually reifying grime's essential effort to portray real life as "the cri de couer of the dispossessed, the narrative form of urban life."²³

One could even characterize this documentary aesthetic of grime as ethnography. Media theorist Lee Barron of Northumbria University argues:

[G]rime songs articulate urban worlds as they are seen through the eyes of those who live

11 Merrily We Roll Along Original Cast Recording, "Not A Day Goes By"

No JUDGE ME I FUCKING DARE YOU. JUDGE ME FOR LISTENING TO MUSICAL THEATER I FUCKING INVITE YOU BE MY FUCKING guEST. TRY to DO IT WITHOUT EXPOSING YOUR HOMOPHOBIA I WELCOME IT.



within these social environments. In this sense, such recordings can and should be added to the repertoire of ethnography because they constitute qualitative 'documents of life' . . . [W]hen listening to grime, we can observe and experience unfamiliar social environments and social conditions as seen through the eyes of its participant observers and communicated in musical form.²⁴

Indeed, grime gives unprecedented insight into the lives and lifestyles of people in London's cities, who through class and/or racial difference continue not to adhere to contemporary notions of "Britishness." "I'm a problem for Anthony Blair," Dizze has rapped.²⁵ The image of a black youth in council housing spitting truths offers a potential threat to a country trying to maintain a place of postcolonial power on the international stage. Grime, as an art committed to documentation, is therefore a useful ethnographic source for understanding the nuances of Black British lived experience; and as a form traditionally performed en masse, it creates a safety in numbers—as opposed to a one-on-one ethnographic interview, which could make a subject uncomfortable and less willing to recount their story.

Hip-hop aesthetics, like those of grime, belong to a timeline spanning decades. The emergence of hip-hop in the late 1970s coincided with the Black Arts movement, characterized by "social and political engagement; a view that art had the ability to encourage change in the world and the viewer; separatism—a belief in a self-contained 'black aesthetic' walled off from white culture; [and] forms that were populist," easily distributed and understood.²⁶ Hip-hop not only plays off American consumer culture (it's "rugged individualism" and "guerrilla capitalism"), but also the idea that it's in conversation with a politically minded "higher" art occupying a more canonical place.²⁷ Black Arts continues to face questions of "quality" in opposition to the idea of a political art; yet hip-hop's emergence in tandem with fine arts of a similar black nationalist bent still connects it to the international art world, to Black art, and its continuing timeline. Today, the artists of what Jeff Chang dubs the "hip-hop generation" have come of age, "shar[ing] a desire to break down boundaries between so-called high and low, to bring the street into the art space and the art space into the street, to make urgent, truth-telling work that reflects the lives, loves, histories, hope,

and fears of their generation."²⁸ Hip-hop aesthetics in the work of contemporary artists such as Kehinde Wiley and Iona Rozeal Brown represent the genre with the potential of also occupying the gallery.²⁹ This high-low dialogue dictates the popularity of artists today like Drake and Kanye West (themselves transcending historical views of traditional hip-hop), marketing streetwear brands as high fashion, effectively changing major industry views and governing tastes. Hip-hop aesthetics—those of MCs themselves and the "hip-hop" generation of art makers—exist on an international scale, far out-reaching the domestic tendrils of grime.

Grime and its aesthetics therefore exist not only for themselves alone, but also in clear opposition to those of American hip-hop. Sociologist Richard Bramwell writes, "by contesting (or even ignoring) American hip-hop artists, grime artists valorize their own work and aesthetically distinct cultural space."³⁰ Grime's minimalism, then, is significant not simply for what is there—its industrial beats and crackling production—but also for what is not. The home recordings of Risky Roadz sans high production quality, the empty color fields of Dizze Rascal and Stormzy's album artworks, and the quiet fantasies of Wheatley's anonymous young boy create spatial voids that claim grime's self-sufficiency, its ability to stand on its own.³¹ Grime's paired-down aesthetic exposes faultlines between the genre and hip-hop, emphasizing difference more than similarity. Presenting themselves in the casual fashion they would in the courtyards of Bow, grime MCs spurn the consumerist interests of hip-hop and its iterations in the art world.

Yet grime today has become more similar to hip-hop in its popularity. Dizze Rascal performed at the opening ceremonies of London's 2012 Olympic Games: a celebration of all things British. The performance belonged to the show's section on contemporary British music, and in his part Dizze Rascal represented the clubbing, grime, and house party scene in Britain's urban centers. He emerges from a giant row house and spits his rhymes in jeans, a snapback, and letterman jacket. Projections of various Dizze Rascal music videos play on the house's walls.³² Bright red lighting and heavy strobe effects give the stage the same feel as Dizzy's album cover, bathed in color. Having Dizze Rascal perform at the Olympics in 2012, almost a decade after *Boy in da Corner* set the precedent for contemporary grime, cemented the genre as a British cultural mainstay. Out of East London's council housing and embroiled in a rich history of British counterculture, grime is old enough to have evolved

into an international phenomenon, yet also young enough to remain relatively true and committed to its roots. Grime continues to occupy the same place of importance in council housing courts as it does on the Olympic stage, and its enduring nature is a testament to the strength of its missions of representing the communities from which it sprung.

Yet there could possibly be a danger to grime's essentialism. In discussing the aesthetics of Black cultural forms scholar Derek Conrad Murray cites Paul Gilroy's *Against Race* for providing an idea of "the eradication of race-based forms of reasoning, calling instead for a universal humanism that would subvert essentializing tendencies."³³ For Gilroy, solidarity through race can be a tenuous, oftentimes nefarious connection.³⁴ In the age of globalism, our identities are too untethered to find solidity through categories of race and ethnicity, which root one to an imagined community too static in such dynamic global exchange. To make Gilroy's argument clearer and more specific, Murray also cites Manthia Diawara's theory of transtextuality, "the mobility of blackness across barriers of color, class, and culture."³⁵ For Diawara, blackness as defined by cultural forms one can release into a marketplace (such as grime and hip-hop) can be coopted and embodied by non-Black subjects. Cultural Blackness, like Gilroy's subjects, is also too untethered to be the seed of true identity.

Can grime therefore really still belong to East London, to the Bow, to the Isle of Dogs? I argue yes. While Dizzee Rascal indeed revealed to the world the international popularity of Grime, Stormzy also "brought it back" with the "Shut Up" video. Grime music as a digital phenomenon can be activated just about anywhere—it's production does not even demand good quality speakers. But the genre's aesthetics point to a rootedness that counters Gilroy's untethered identities. Grime is not a means for nationalist connection, it is the connection: a cultural embodiment of an economically disenfranchised Black Britain that still celebrates its origins. Grime's roots in Caribbean, West African, and American forms attest to the hybrid condition of Blackness in Britain, the multiple histories and traditions that intersect within generations that, succeeding the initial Windrush in the 1940s and '50s, have created new identities for themselves at once entrenched in place yet also honoring cultural pathways of space and time. Grime truly is home-grown. Out of international seeds, yet buried deep in Black British soil.

- 1 Dan Hancox, "Grime and East London," *The Observer* (London, UK), April 27, 2014.
- 2 *Street, Sound & Style*, Television series, Directed by Ewen Spencer, 2015: London: i-D Magazine for Channel 4.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Simon Reynolds, "Grime." In *The Wire Primers: A Guide to Modern Music*, ed. Rob Young (New York: Verso, 2009): 77.
- 5 Nabeel Zuberi, "New Throat Fe Chat": The Voices and Media of MC Culture," in *Black Popular Music in Britain since 1945*, ed. Jon Stratton and Nabeel Zuberi (Burlington: Ashgate, 2014): 185.
- 6 Jesse Weaver Shipley, *Living the Hiplife: Celebrity and Entrepreneurship in Ghanaian Popular Music* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013): 277.
- 7 Reynolds, "Grime," 78.
- 8 Hancox, "Grime and East London."
- 9 Dizzee Rascal's seminal 2003 album *Boy in da Corner* will be discussed later in the paper.
- 10 *Street, Sound & Style*.
- 11 Ibid.
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 Ibid.
- 14 Clive Martin, "From 2 Tone to grime, our youth cults showcase a vibrant history of Britain," *The Observer* (London, UK), May 17, 2015.
- 15 *Street, Sound & Style*.
- 16 Martin, "From 2 Tone to grime..."
- 17 Simon Reynolds, "Road Warriorz," *The Village Voice* (New York, NY), April 20, 2005.
- 18 Reynolds, "Grime," 78.
- 19 *Risky Roadz—Tha Roadz Are Real—Volume 1*, London, UK: On Road Entertainment, 2004. DVD.
- 20 Ibid.
- 21 *Risky Roadz—Volume 1*.
- 22 Ibid.
- 23 Caspar Melville, "Beats, Rhymes and Grime," *New Humanist*, May 31, 2007.
- 24 Barron, Lee. "The sound of street corner society: UK grime music as ethnography." *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 16, no. 5 (2013): 532.
- 25 Zuberi, "New Throat Fe Chat' . . .", 187.
- 26 Kellie Jones, "Black West: Thoughts on Art in Los Angeles" in *New Thoughts on the Black Arts Movement*, ed. Lisa Gail Collins and Margo Natalie Crawford (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2008): 43.
- 27 Derek Conrad Murray, "Hip-Hop vs. High Art: Notes on Race as Spectacle" *Art Journal* 63, no. 2 (2004): 7.
- 28 Chang, xi.
- 29 Krista Thompson, "The Sound of Light: Reflections on Art History in the Visual Culture of Hip-Hop" *The Art Bulletin* 91, no. 4 (2009).
- 30 Richard Bramwell, *UK Hip-Hop, Grime, and the City: The Aesthetic and Ethics of London's Rap Scenes* (New York: Routledge, 2015): 111.
- 31 Ibid., 120.
- 32 Olympic, "Dizzee Rascal—Opening Ceremony Performance | London 2012 Olympics," YouTube video, 3 minutes, Posted July 2012.
- 33 Murray, 12.
- 34 Ibid.
- 35 Ibid., 18.

IN DEFENSE OF ONE DIRECTION Emma Keyes



I. BEST SONG EVER

Think of your favorite song for a moment. Or, if you're like me, think of the song that you have listened to on repeat most recently because picking one favorite song is an impossible task. (I'm thinking of "Nothing to It" by the New Basement Tapes which I listened to over and over on the drive to New Haven.) Are you hearing the song in your head? What is it?

Probably not a One Direction song, right? And to be fair, *Rolling Stone* or *Pitchfork* or whichever music blog du jour feels most relevant probably won't put a One Direction song at the top of any "Best Of" lists. But so what? Can you name a band more fun from the past ten years? Maybe you can, but I'll stick to my guns on this one: One Direction has earned its worth as a musical group. Their scarily dedicated fans don't just like them because they're hot (although obviously they are that, as well) but because somehow it's easy to connect to their music, or at least dance to it.

This is a defense of One Direction. Hear me out because they are worth defending. Most derision for boy bands in general thinly veils a cultural disdain for teenage girls and the things that they care about. You Sad Yale Boy or classic rock aficionado or up-and-coming rapper do not have better taste than the average fifteen-year-old girl, so listen up.

And if I somehow have to prove my musical knowledge chops—which I don't—I was raised on indie rock. I sang Replacements songs in the shower when I was eight and bragged about Elvis Costello on the elementary school playground. But I also love to bop to boyband music once in a while. I contain multitudes. Sue me.

II. WHAT MAKES YOU BEAUTIFUL

Obviously if you hate pop music (to which I say: get over yourself), One Direction probably isn't the band for you. I have no interest in arguing that they are a perfect band. They aren't. I'm here to defend teenage girls, but that doesn't mean that the the object of their affection shouldn't be critiqued when necessary.

The song that first catapulted the Britain's Got Talent manufactured boyband into the height of American popular music was the inescapably catchy "What Makes You Beautiful." The music video consists of the five boys (and at that time, they really were just boys) on a beach singing to *you* the girl that doesn't know she's beautiful about how

beautiful you are. The whole premise of the song hinges on an assumption of low self-esteem. And not only that, but what makes *you* desirable is that low self-esteem in the first place. Not the most incredible message to send to fourteen year-old girls, for sure.

One of the songs from their second album *Take Me Home* contains more questionable messaging to teenage girls. Ed Sheeran wrote the song "Little Things" and maybe it would have played differently coming out of his mouth, but hearing the five objectively Hot Guys™ that make up One Direction lovingly pick apart the flaws in this hypothetical woman's body for the purpose of reinforcing that those flaws are lovable doesn't come across all that well. Mostly, if they could just stop playing on women's low self-esteem, I would have no problems with them at all.

That being said, the majority of their music has fine messaging! Unsurprisingly it tends to get repetitive and I would love if they had more songs about friendship or weird stuff that has happened to them, but their fan base loves cheesy romance, and that's okay. While the importance of teenage girls being comfortable first and foremost with the way they are—no matter their relationship status—should not be understated, I don't see any problem with letting them daydream about someone a) wanting to show them a good time (sexually or otherwise! Teen girls should be able to think about their own sexualities without shame) or b) experiencing mushy, dramatic, romantic love someday. That's as valid a dream as desperately wanting your team to win the Superbowl this year or striving to be a CEO or writing the Next Great American Novel.

III. LIVE WHILE WE'RE YOUNG

Alongside society's clear and present disdain for teenage girls, hating on boybands mostly feels anti-fun. It's as if taking a quick dance break from the hellish landscape of 2017 should be considered a source of shame rather than a much-needed breather. Why would I apologize for trying to avoid losing my mind?

So many adult men hold bands they liked in their youth up as the standard to which all music should adhere. Sorry y'all, but Led Zeppelin is overrated and I would be happy to go the rest of my life without hearing "Stairway to Heaven" played ever again. Music like that is fine, if five-minute guitar solos are your thing, but there's no legitimate moral superiority to be found arguing that bands

like Led Zeppelin, or whoever, far surpass pop music with a beat, no matter how many times you saw them in concert in 1974.

Nirvana was a fine band, but you don't ever turn to them to have a good time. Plus all the corycatting that came after them ruined rock music for ten years (I'm side-eying you, Stone Temple Pilots). I don't see One Direction derailing any musical genres anytime soon. Embrace the vanilla aesthetic of the status quo now and then and dance with your friends.

IV. DON'T FORGET WHERE YOU BELONG

In true Blues Brothers fashion, it's time to bring the band back together. Sure Harry Styles was good in *Dunkirk*, but the only word for his solo album? Boring. Maybe I'm not expressing a popular opinion here, but that boy takes himself too seriously and so should not be given complete creative control at this moment in his life. One Direction brings out the best in him. I'd argue that the most surprising (and best) breakout solo 1D song of this summer is Niall Horan's "Slow Hands," a satisfyingly catchy summer bop, but Niall is the member of One Direction most into getting the band back together, so I doubt his solo success would hinder his desire to regroup with his boys. Zayn certainly won't ever return to the group, so they won't ever be as much fun as they once were, but that's no reason to give up.

The tenuous future of the group shouldn't have any bearing on their cultural caché up to this point, no matter what I think. The most important things about them are how many people loved and still love them for a variety of reasons and the sheer number of bops that their finely tuned pop machine produced. Even if you disagree with every point I've made, objectively, they've had an impact on our cultural consciousness. Long live the culture, as they say.

The deep rooted scorn for bands like One Direction (or N'Sync or the Backstreet Boys or—God forbid!—any given girl band) must be exhausting. It's okay to let people like things sometimes, I promise. We'll all have a lot more fun.

WYBC YALE RADIO

RELATIVELY DARK
BLUE NEITHER
PURPLE NOR GREEN
28: CONFESSION
FALL 2017

rdbnpng.com

EDITOR IN CHIEF
Emma Keyes

MANAGING EDITORS
Anna Ayres-Brown
Claire Haldeman

DESIGNERS
Bryce Wilner
Matthew Wolff

PRINTING
Linco, Long Island City

TYPEFACES
FreeSans
Garamond No. 8

RDBNPNG is the music magazine of WYBC Yale Radio. The opinions expressed in this magazine are those of the authors and does not reflect the views of the Yale Broadcasting Company or Yale University. If you are interested in contributing to *RDBNPNG* contact: zine@wybc.com.

